

DESERT AND MOUNTAIN CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Officer

DATE: September 9, 2016

SUBJECT: Agenda Item IX: Consideration of resolution authorizing staff to submit a comment letter to the California Department of Transportation on the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Statement for the Northwest 138 Corridor Improvement Project, Antelope Valley.

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing staff to submit a comment letter to the California Department of Transportation on the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Statement for the Northwest 138 Corridor Improvement Project, Antelope Valley.

Background: Staff just noticed the availability of the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Statement (EIR/ EIS) for the Northwest 138 Corridor Improvement Project with the comment period closing on September 25, 2016. The expansion of Highway 138 from State Route 14 to Interstate 5 will dramatically alter the ecology of the southwest Antelope Valley. The DMCA submitted the two attached comment letters on the proposed High Desert Corridor to date. The more recent of the letters addressed the post-project distribution and sizing of highway underpasses for wildlife. However much more detailed site-specific analysis and mitigation recommendations are needed from the DMCA. Staff has not extensively reviewed the EIS/EIR but did find a dearth of information, analysis, and mitigation regarding wildlife movement across the highway. The High Desert Corridor project provides insufficient wildlife undercrossings and provides no analysis of what the existing and probable land uses are on the few undercrossings it does provide. At a minimum, staff seeks authority to send in a comment letter that addresses deficiencies in the wildlife movement analysis and mitigation measures. The proposed project will border the DMCA's 400-acre property that extends to the highway from Fairmont Butte. Ideally staff seeks authority to sign and submit a comment letter that addresses any important EIR/EIS deficiencies and to recommend a wide range of mitigation measures.